DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 294 170 CS 211 112

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TITLE Sentence Combining and Organizing Principles.
PUB DATE Oct 83
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Conference on Sentence Combining and the Teaching of Writing (2nd, Oxford, OH, October 20-22, 1983).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; English Instruction; *Heuristics; Higher Education; Linguistics; Organization; Prewriting; *Protocol Analysis; Secondary Education; *Sentence Combining; Student Writing Models; Tagmemic Analysis; *Writing (Composition); Writing Exercises; Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Instructional Models; Writing Strategies

ABSTRACT

Sentence combining is a powerful tool for structuring information and can be used effectively throughout the composing process. The teaching of composition can integrate into the composing process a number of concepts, including the use of heuristics, intellectual strategies, organizing principles, and sentence combining. A useful model for the composing process is a protocol analysis developed by Linda Flower and John Hayes (1980) which has four operations: assigning, planning, translating, and reviewing. The use of heuristics is designed to help the writer retrieve information he or she already knows, to point to information not known but available by reading and observing, and finally, to aid the writer in discovering organizing principles for the paper. The heuristic procedure consists of a worksheet that includes the intellectual strategies of view, illustration, classification, analogy, setting, order and change, cause-effect, and focus. Together the instructor and student compile the linguistic cues and connectives that signal to the reader the logical relationships of ideas. A study of one student's use of this integrated approach shows that it provides the writer with a method to move effectively through the various stages of the composing process. Using sentence combining during both the exploring and clarifying that occur throughout the composing process can contribute to more efficient composing and subsequently to more effective communication. (Four notes and nine references are appended.) (MS)

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Sentence Combining and Organizing Principles

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Because sentence combining is such a powerful tool for structuring information, many of us have experienced difficulty in placing sentence combining in proper perspective. A number of texts advocate sentence combining in the prewriting stage as a kind of aerobics before the real performance. In fact, not long ago I observed a class where it appeared that, in true Jane Fonda fashion, the students were being urged to right-branch, one, two, three, four, and then left-branch, one, two, three, four. Some texts recommend sentence combining in the revising and editing stages. Other texts place sentence combining as the main focus of the writing performance. The questions remain: How much sentence combining? Where in the composing process is it most productive? Should sentence combining be used during the exploring process or in the clarifying and communicating process? In this paper I will address these questions by describing an approach to the teaching of composition that integrates into the composing process a number of concepts including the use of heuristics, intellectual strategies, organizing principles, and sentence combining. Using a protocol analysis developed by Flowers and Hayes (1980), I will illustrate one student's involvement in this integrated approach.

Composing Process

In our developmental sections of English Composition, we utilize a pedagogical model of the composing process based on the work of Linda Flower and John Hayes (1980). The four operations in this model are assigning, planning, translating, and reviewing. In the assigning operation, attention is focused

on the essential elements of rhetoric, namely: subject, purpose, writer, audience, and form. The next operation, planning, interfaces the act of gathering and generating information with the rhetorical element of subject matter.

Heuristics

We find that often a heuristic procedure is helpful at this prewriting, aiding the student in generating relevant information. In an attempt to intervene beneficially in the composing process, we have developed a version of Odell's (1976) tagmemic heuristics. This heuristic is designed to help the writer retrieve information he or she already knows, to point to information not known but available by reading and observing, and finally, to aid the writer in discovering organizing principles for the paper.[1]

Intellectual Strategies

The heuristic procedure consists of a worksheet that includes the intellectual strategies of view, illustration, classification, analogy, setting, order and change, cause-effect, and focus. Students are given ample practice in transforming these intellectual strategies into heuristic questions. For example, from how many viewpoints can we examine the subject? What are the physical objects that surround the subject and how do these objects impact upon the subject? How many ways can we define and divide the subject matter? What contrasts with the subject?

Once the intellectual strategies are well defined and practiced, students examine how professional authors use intellectual strategies in exploring and communicating their ideas. A sample paragraph from Nora Ephron's (1983) "Growing Up Absurd" reveals a number of these intellectual strategies and their respective linguistic cues.

> I spent the early years of my adolescence absolutely certain that I might at any any point gum it up. I did not feel at all like a girl. I was boyish. I was athletic, ambitious, outspoken, competitive, noisey, rambunctious. I had scabs on my knees and my socks slid into my loafers and I could throw a football. I wanted desperately not to be that way, not to be a mixture of both things, but instead just one, a girl, a definitely indisputable girl. As soft and pink as a nursery. And nothing would do that for me, I felt, but breasts.

Linguistic Cues

From this paragraph and Ephron's article as a whole, the instructor and students begin our on-going task of compiling the linguistic cues and connectives that signal to the reader the logical relationships of ideas. Some of the linguistic cues are sentence connectives while others are simply lexical items that also reveal the underlying logic of the intellectual strategies. If connectives do not appear in the surface sentences, then we ask ourselves what is the underlying logic? And what are the connectives that might appear in the deep structure and have been deleted? More on this matter later. The following chart lists the nine intellectual strategies and representative linguistic cues. The intellectual strategies and linguistic cues are based on the work of Odell (1977) and Packard (1976). Examples again are taken from Nora Ephron's, "Shaping Up Absurd" (1983).

Intellectual Strategies and Linguistic Cues

1. View — I, you, he, it, names of people, man, woman...

   Examples: I did not feel at all like a girl.
   "Did you want to marry my son?" the woman said.

2. Classification — am, is, was, are, aspects, sections, parts, for example, for instance...

   Examples: My best friend in school was Diana Roskol
   I was boyish.
   I had many of the trappings generally associated with the field of girldom - a girl's name, for example, and dresses, my own telephone, and autograph book.

3. Analogy — like, as, is, resembles, similar to, just as...

Example: As soft and pink as a nursery.

4. Illustration — (often related to coordinating, emphasizing, and elaborating)

and, either-or, and-and, first, second, third, indeed, in fact, that is to say, to explain...

I had scabs on my knees and my socks slid into my loafers and I could throw a football.

5. Setting — (nouns that refer to geographical places or objects or sensory properties surrounding a subject)

Bar-B-Q potato chips, giant bottles of ginger ale, fresh popcorn with melted butter, hot fudge on Baskin-Robbins jamoca ice cream, powdered-sugar doughnuts from Van de Kamps.

6. Contrast — but, not, although, yet, however, even if, nothing, in contrast, true-yet, alternatively, on the other hand...,

And nothing would do that for me, I felt, but breasts. That was the killer. Necking I could deal with. Intercourse I could deal with. But it had never crossed my mind that a man was going to touch my breasts.

7. Chronological Order and Change

when, before, while, after, later, at the same time, earlier, next-finally; became, grew, started, increased, decreased...

It is September, just before school begins.
Her little girl, her first born, had finally become a woman.

8. Cause-effect — because, if-then, therefore, thus, so, as a result, on my account, showing, indicating, that is why, in order that...

It was really a lovely moment, and I remember it so clearly not just because it was one of the two times I ever saw my mother cry on my account (the other was when I was caught being a six year old kleptomaniac) but also because the incident did not mean to me what it meant to her.

9. Focus — (Grammatical subject of clauses)

My house was full of apples and peaches and milk.
Diana's house had nothing in it that was good for you, and what's more, you could stuff it in right up until dinner and nobody cared.

Once students have become familiar with the use of the intellectual strategies, the heuristics and the respective linguistic cues, the subject matter is assigned or self-selected. In the papers I have chosen for discussion, students were assigned their personal language as a topic. I shall trace the process one student uses when combining sentences as observed in an oral protocol. Here, she is using her prewriting activities and her draft to create a second draft.

Protocol Analysis

Kim's Prewriting Activities

Kim had generated information concerning her personal language as encouraged on her heuristic worksheet. The results were an abundance of information now requiring a strategy powerful enough to select and organize relevant information.

Once the matters of audience, purpose, and form had been reviewed, a second worksheet asked Kim to go back to the information generating worksheet and underline information that she believed would be most appropriate, given the subject matter (her individual language), the intended audience (a classmate from another state), and the purpose (informing the audience that everone possesses his or her own unique dialect). After underlining all the pertinent information, Kim confronted the worksheet question asking her to focus or converge on the relevant information using classification strategies to group information initially.

With the information transferred and grouped under the strategy of focus, the third purpose of the heuristic is activated: helping the reader to discover an organizing principle. One way that this can be accomplished is by asking the question: What intellectual strategies appear productive and powerful enough to become organizing principles, arranging information

logically? In Kim's case she had produced considerable information under change, contrast, and cause-effect. These strategies that helped Kim explore the subject can now become possible organizing principles, first, to give order to the whole essay, and second, to help develop paragraphs more fully. The worksheet now calls for her to articulate a working thesis statement to incorporate these organizing principles. Based on her heuristic, Kim incorporated cause-effect and order and change into her tentative thesis statement:

> Through my years of education, gaining different life experiences, and being exposed to a variety of people, my idiolect has changed, matured, and expanded.

With the information generated from the heuristics and with the organizing principles in mind, the writer possesses a prepared mind much more capable of simultaneously organizing and creating.

Kim's Sentence Combining Activities

When the first draft is completed, the teacher can beneficially intervene in the composing process. Earlier classes have exposed students to a five step approach to sentence combining (Nugent and LeDuc, 1977): generating, processing, connecting, positioning, and operating. Teacher and students can read the draft aloud, bracketing sentences that appear to need sentence combining work. The information gained from Kim's protocol proves beneficial in illustrating the processes Kim utilizes in writing draft number two. Kim was quick to target eight places in her paper she thought deserved or needed sentence combining. Kim observed that several of the sentences needing work appeared as last sentences in a paragraph. When questioned on this, Kim remarked that her sentences in this position often were attempts to "wrap-up"

the paragraph. A typical example of these sentences is the concluding sentences of her second pargraph: "My idiolect continued to change while I was in high school. The main influence being my peers."

In contrast to these undercombined clinching sentences, internal sentences incorporated quite effectively such intellectual strategies as change and contrast and appropriate linguistic cues: "For example, I finally found out what menstruation meant instead of pretending I knew. Also I realized that a sperm is something other than a swear word and that conception is not something at a football game." Kim was able to identify her use of the intellectual strategies of classification, illustration, and contrast as well as the linguistic cues: "is" "for example", "also," "and," "instead of," "other than," and "not." She also identified the positioning as right-branching and the operations as adding and deleting.

Presenting additional challenge for sentence combining work were such textured key sentences as Kim produced in final positions in her paragraphs. In this case the last sentence in her first paragraph is her thesis statement:

> Through my years of education, gaining different life experiences, and being exposed to a variety of people, my idiolect has changed, matured, and expanded.

The protocol analysis revealed that when Kim followed the sentence combining procedures discussed in class, her initial denaturing of the sentences produced the following sentences:

> My idiolect has changed.
> My idiolect has matured.
> My idiolect has expanded.
>
> I have been exposed to a variety of people through my years of education.
> I have been exposed to a variety of people through my different life experiences.

She then underlined exposed and at this point experienced some dissonance when asked what were the underlying logic and connectors in the two groups of sentences. She then rewrote

My idiolect has changed through my years of education.
My idiolect has changed through gaining different life experiences.
My idiolect has changed by being exposed to a variety of people.

Following our class procedures[3] we set up the following format:

Logic: Connective: Positioning: Operations:

Kim reviewed the intellectual strategies and their linguistic cues and identified the logic as cause-effect, and the connective as "through." At this stage she began to write the output sentences, starting with the connector "through" but half way changing "through" to"because." The resulting output sentence and format read

My idiolect has changed because of my years of education, my different life experiences, and my being exposed to a variety of people.

Logic: cause-effect Connective: because Positioning: right-branching

In applying the above format and process to the original cluster of kernel sentences,

My idiolect has changed.
My idiolect has matured.
My idiolect has expanded.

Kim recognized her original use of "and" had signalled coordination and parallelism of the three verbs. She then reworked the sentences resulting in

My idiolect has changed while maturing and expanding.

Although she did not remark on this point during the protocol, I believe her repeated use of the verb "changed" in the second cluster of sentences (My idiolect has changed....) resulted in her awareness that change is a

superordinate concept and mature and expand are subordinate. To bring this intuitive knowledge closer to more explicit awareness, we again worked out the format for these sentences.

Matrix: My idiolect has changed.

Inputs: My idiolect has matured.

My idiolect has expanded.

Output: My idiolect has changed while maturing and expanding.

Logic: Order and Change Connective: while Positioning: Right-branching

I reminded Kim to try left and mid-branching of the input sentences before moving on to the next phase. The results were as follows:

Right-branched: My idiolect has changed while maturing and expanding.

Left-branched: While maturing and expanding, my idiolect has changed.

Mid-branched: My idiolect, while maturing and expanding, has changed.

Kim favored the latter sentence, the mid-branched, of the three optional outputs. (Many students respond similarly, selecting mid-branched sentences because this combination "sounds more professional.") However, when Kim placed this mid-branched sentence next to the cause- effect output, she reversed the matrix and input sentences resulting in the original sentence now reading thus

> My idiolect has changed because of my years of education, my different life experiences, and my exposure to a variety of people. While changing, my idiolect has expanded and matured.

Both instrutor and Kim felt that although "while" might not be the most precise of connectors, it was, however, an acceptable one at this stage of rehearsing and was in keeping with cause-effect and order-change, the primary intellectual strategies and organizing principles of the essay.

Other sentences such as "Language is all relative and can be used to your advantage, depending on where you are and who you are with." received the same branching attention resulting in "Because language is relative to who you are

with and where you are, it can be used to your advantage." Another sentence, "These two incidents, along with many others, have colored my speech and offered me a wider vocabulary to select from." was recombined into "These two incidents, along with many others, have colored my speech while also broadening my vocabulary."

In addition to cause-effect as an organizing principle, Kim and her classmates found other intellectual strategies productive when they wrote themes analyzing their idiolect. No matter what the primary or secondary organizing principles were, the students found that contrasting their idiolects with the language of other people was a fruitful way both to explore and communicate the subject. Both instructor and students made the significant observation that in many cases more contrasting examples were found in the theme than on the heuristic worksheets indicating that the prewriting procedures, by activating certain categories and competencies, were helping students to generate and organize information in the actual writing process.

The Logic of Sentence Combining

As previously observed, Kim's use of the linguistic cues "instead of," "other than," and "not something," clearly signalled the logic of contrast. Many students, however, needed the sentence combining work to bring these processes to the awareness level. This awareness can help the writer not only to signal the intended logic but subsequently to produce new information and combine sentences that are stylistically more effective. For example, one student in illustrating contrasting pronunciations, wrote the following:

> I was told that the bathroom is down the hall when
> I had simply asked "Do you know where the party is?"

When examined and processed for logic, connectives, positioning, and operations, the student produced several versions with her final selection as follows:

When I simply asked, "Do you know where the party is?",
I was told "The bathroom is down the hall and to the left."

In another case, a simple sentence was bracketed as being worthy of attention in terms of the need for examples as well as contrasts.

My parents sometimes disapproved of my expressions.

An input sentence provided examples

They corrected my ain'ts, yahs, and nopes.

The earlier choice of contrast as one of the organizing principles produced another input sentence

They approved of is not, yes, and no.

The resulting outcome sentence was

My parents sometimes disapproved of my expressions,
correcting my "ain't" to "is not", and my "yahs" and "nopes"
to "yes's" and "no's."

Another sentence "My use of language is different in New York than in New Hampshire." underwent the same process resulting in "My weekends in New York consist of a 'hero' and a 'six of beer', but when I'm in New Hampshire it's a 'grinder' and a 'rack'."

The use of contrast to produce information proved fruitful in both cases. In a discussion of the logic and connector needed in the sentence "My parents sometimes disapproved of my expressions, correcting my 'ain't' to 'is not' and my 'yahs' and 'nopes' to 'yes's' and 'no's'." the student identified the cause-effect logic and the deep structure connector "as a result" or its equivalent. I then posed the question: Can the reader identify without too much difficulty this logical connector deleted in the surface sentence? Both student and instructor agreed that a reader could "recover" the underlying logic. However, in examples such as

I have a strong regional dialect. I come from northern New Hampshire.

the logical relationship is neither apparent nor easily recoverable. The indiscriminating use of connectors such as "and" or "being" only tends to confuse the reader. Mature writers revealed that they are careful and precise in their selection of connectors as well as their deletion of them. Less mature writers,as illustrated above, too often signal their egocentrism in their failure to provide either deep or surface logical connectors. A surface sentence such as

> Because I come from northern New Hampshire, I have a strong regional dialect

reveals a writer's awareness of audience in the clear signaling of cause-effect logic with emphasis on the cause by the use of left-branching.[4]

An Integrated Approach:

In summary, the integrated approach of intellectual strategies, heuristics, organizing principles and sentence combining provides the writer with a method to move effectively through the various stages of the composing process. The intellectual strategies in the form of heuristics help the writer to discover organizing principles. These principles when articulated in a working thesis statement have the potential not only to select, combine and connect ideas logically but also the power to generate and incorporate new information during the actual process of writing.

In terms of integrating sentence combining into the composing process, the information that results from the heuristic procedures supplies the content for constructing open and organic sentence combining work. The linguistic cues that accompany each intellectual strategy, in turn, provide structured activities promoting the techniques of coherence through connectives, structural patterns, and references to key words and earlier words and phrases.

Returning to my earlier question whether sentence combining should occur during exploration or clarification, I am reminded of a similar question found in a poem I once heard Robert Frost recite:

The Poet as Troublemaker

She likes to split an apple down the middle
And with her hands behind her ask them, which?
The other children fall in with the riddle
But he says, both hands! both hands! you sly old bitch!

Like Frost, we too should resist the temptation to answer simply a complex question. We should not relegate sentence combining to any one stage, but rather should keep working at using such a powerful tool during both the exploring and clarifying that occur throughout the composing process. Such integration of sentence combining can contribute to a more efficient composing process and subsequently to more effective communication.

Endnotes

1. Lee Odell, "Question-asking and the Teaching of Writing," English Record, 27:3 (Summer-Autumn 1976), pp. 78-86. Our version of the heuristics can be found in H.E. Nugent "The Role of Audience Awareness in the Writing of College Freshmen." (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Microfilms International, No. 7927103, 1979) or by writing to the author at Keene State College, Keene, N.H. 03431. The author is currently working with a colleague on a computer program, EUREKA, incorporating the Odell heuristics.

2. Linda Flower and John R. Hayes. "Problem-solving Strategies and the Writing Process" College English, 39:4 (Dec. 1977), 449-461.

3. Harold E. Nugent and Daryl LeDuc, "Creating Sentence Combining Activities." pp. 106-118. Operations as described in this article consist of adding, deleting, substituting, and rearranging. These transformations can occur singularly or concomitantly. For sake of space, the operation processes will not be included in the formats that follow.

4. In an article, "The Role of Old and New Information in Sentence Combining (Nugent 1979), I discuss five possible reasons for a writer constructing right-, left- and mid-branching sentences.

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